

DIASPORIC DREAM: LETTER TO GRANDFATHER

Tafea Polamalu

I am the end product of opportunity
the final result of your foresight

I am what they call

“second-generation US Samoan”
that generation who has
never been to Sāmoa

I am first-world
fully-developed
fully-civilized

I am born and
raised among them
melted into them
fluent in their language and ways

I am Educated,
Modernized,
American

I am the quintessential neo Samoan
a walking wealth of Western knowledge

I know my pledge of allegiance
my presidents
all fifty state capitals

I can solve quadratic equations
formulate a thesis
type over 60 words per minute
dissect a frog and identify all of the vital organs
And discuss the theory of continental drift

I can tell you the difference between
Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia
I am well versed in the Lapita theory

I know all about Sāmoa
population, climate, geography
average life expectancy

I am the vision

Polamalu

the progress
a masterpiece of assimilation

The world is at my finger tips

I am the future
woven of fear and survival
the fully evolved immigrant
the diasporic dream
I have forgotten what is useless
and learned what is important

I am what eventually becomes of
those who left,
not native like you
but settler like them,
but not one of them
nor one of you

I am lodged between worlds in
the war zone where mine fields and
razor wire connect cultures

I wish I would have known you
I would like to show you this place,
but I do not remember you
or Sāmoa
or speak your language
or know your ways
I do not remember why I am here

I will never return